

MORASHAH
THE RABBINIC FELLOWSHIP OF THE UTJ
 811 Palisade Ave., Teaneck, NJ 07666
 www.utj.org 201.801.0707

Parashat HaShavuah Series

Rabbi Noah Gradofsky

Parashat Lech Lecha

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶךָ
God said to Abram: Go from your land, your birthplace and the house of your father to the land that I will show you.
 (Gen 12:1)

Well, that's a little vague! Where did you say I was going again? I know what I'm leaving - my land, my birthplace, my father's house. I'm leaving everything I know. And where am I going? Oh. You'll show me that later. Great. That's reassuring.

About to embark on a spiritual journey that will change his whole life, God doesn't even tell Abram where he is going. Why not? The Midrash asks why God did not reveal to Abram the destination of this trip. Genesis Rabbah (Ch. 39 & 55) explains: 'in order to make it precious in his eyes, and to give him reward for each and every step.' Not knowing his destination, Abram would have to constantly look to God for instruction. And each step of the way had its own reward.

Perhaps this is true about every spiritual journey. As a person grows and develops in his/her spirituality, one cannot be certain where one will end up. Each day presents us with new realizations, new ways to understand God's world. New inspiration and new challenges. But it is because of this that, like Abram, each and every step closer to God can be so rewarding.

An example: I did not grow up halakhically observant. Nor did a light switch get flipped one day that magically turned me into a halakhic Jew. Getting to where I am today was a journey. From the time I first decided to wear tsitsit daily, to the time when I decided to no longer eat non-kosher food, to the time that I started to observe the Sabbath. There were many steps along the way, and I suppose there are an infinite number of steps that remain for me to take. But with each step I made, I could never be sure where it would lead me. Would I keep it up? Would I take a step back?

When I started to pray three times a day - would it make me feel a more permanent connection to God - would it lead me to observe even more, or would I be frustrated by failing to live up to that commitment? Or perhaps doing too much would lead me to burnout. I did not know.

The Union for Traditional Judaism is a trans-denominational organization dedicated to bringing the message of open-minded Halakhic Judaism to the widest possible audience.

But carefully, and slowly I took each step. And hopefully I will continue to do so. Like everyone, I do not know what my final destination will be on my personal spiritual journey. But with each step, I believe there can be great reward.

Today we remember the day that the journey began, when God told Abram go “to the land that I will show you”. And so, today I hope you will take a step on your own journey. What will be your destination? There is no way of knowing. God hasn't revealed that. But like Abram we all know we are capable of taking one step. And we know there is reward for each and every step. So, take a step. Hopefully it will be one step in a lifelong march. But at least take one step. Say one more berakhah (blessing) on the food you eat. Eat one more kosher meal. The list of options is endless. *Lekh lekha* - take one step.

Shabbat Shalom!